

marched for fairness, and they marched for justice.

Why do they march, we may ask? They march because the USDA has a documented history of discrimination against blacks and other minority farmers. Over the last 32 years there have been numerous reports declaring and describing the problems of deliberate discrimination by the USDA against black farmers, by agencies such as the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the inspector general, and our very own Committee on Government Operations, as it was known then.

Farmers and ranchers are invaluable resources to all of us. American producers, who represent less than 3 percent of the total population, provide more than enough food and fiber to meet the needs of our Nation, as well as many nations overseas. By now it should be clear that it is not in our national interest to accept the elimination of small farmers, family farmers, nor minority farmers and the limited resource farmers in the name of progress.

From 1910 to 1993 the number of American farms have declined from a little more than 6.4 million to less than 2.1 million, roughly a 70-percent decline and decrease. This decline is even greater in the year 1997. The decline in minority farmers is even sharper.

In my home State of North Carolina, there has been a 64-percent decline in minority farmers just over the last 15 years, from 6,996 farms in 1978 to 2,498 farms in 1992. There are several reasons why the number of minority and limited-resource farmers are declining so rapidly, but the one that has been documented time and time again is the discriminatory environment present in the Department of Agriculture, the very agency established by the U.S. Government to accommodate and assist special needs of all farmers and all ranchers.

The General Accounting Office found instances of discrimination in fiscal years 1995 and 1996. GAO also found the disapproval rates of loans were 6 percent higher for minority farmers than the 10 percent rate for the nonminority farmers. The very next month two related reports were released: the Office of Inspector General's Evaluation Report for the Secretary on civil rights issues and the Civil Rights Action Team Report.

The authors of these hard-hitting reports came to the identical conclusion that those who had looked at this issue some 32 years before did. There are significant problems of discrimination within the Department of Agriculture. The very same conclusion, 32 years later.

The farmers and ranchers of America, including minority and limited-resource producers, through their labor and sustained effort, sustain each and every one of us and maintain the lifeblood of our Nation through providing food to us. Without these hard-working men and women, how could we be fed and clothed, regardless of their race?

These people do not discriminate with their product. That is why, Mr. Speaker, each of us should commit ourselves that we should not have the extra burden of discrimination or racism rearing its ugly head. Secretary Glickman has said he is personally committed to returning USDA to its original status as a people's department, to serve all the people, all the people, without regard to their racial identification.

I am equally committed in that effort to achieve that goal. I introduced H.R. 2185, the USDA Accountability and Equity Act of 1997, in conjunction with the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. SANFORD BISHOP, the gentleman from Alabama, Mr. EARL HILLIARD, and the gentleman from Mississippi, Mr. BENNY THOMPSON.

Mr. Speaker, we all should have the goal that discrimination has no basis for the farmers and producers for all of America. Please, Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to join with me in that goal.

#### WE MUST REMEMBER OUR POW'S AND MIA'S

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentlewoman from California [Ms. SANCHEZ] is recognized during morning hour debates for 2 minutes.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, last Friday I joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars from my district in recognizing and remembering Prisoner-of-War, Missing-in-Action day. POW-MIA day offers us an opportunity not only to remember and recognize those that we have lost, but also to rededicate ourselves to the cause of finding these men or their remains and bringing them home to their family and to their grateful Nation. We must work together to ensure the fullest possible accounting of these men, for their families and for all Americans who have benefitted from their fight for liberty and freedom.

There are still over 164 POW's and MIA's from California from the Vietnam war unaccounted for. This means that these 164 men will not walk home tonight to their wives and children, 164 men who will not be able to enjoy the freedom for which they gave the last full measure of devotion.

I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing and in remembering these men. We must continue to fight and remember those we have lost in battle for freedom. Until all of these men from throughout this country have been accounted for, we must not rest in our efforts.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 8 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. PEASE] at 2 p.m.

#### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Rev. James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

As we offer our thanks and praise to You, O gracious God, we listen to Your word of faith, Your message of hope, and Your gift of love. Enable us as best we can to hear Your word even with the clamor of the world about us compelling our attention and demanding our allegiance. Help us to distinguish Your message of justice and mercy and humility from the cries of any false prophet who prescribes words of selfishness or arrogance. We are grateful for Your favor to us, O God, by which You bless us and our Nation, and we pray for Your benediction upon us, now and evermore. Amen.

#### THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. CHABOT] come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. CHABOT led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

#### EDUCATION AT THE HEART OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

(Mr. BALLENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, if any issue goes to the heart of the concept that every child should have a shot at the American dream, education is it. Without a good education, many dreams will lie forever beyond the reach of those who wish to get ahead in life.

But there are many difficult obstacles standing in the way of a good education, especially for those born to disadvantage and hardship. Of course, it is easy for the liberal elite, safely ensconced in their suburban homes and enclaves, to send their own children to exclusive private school. But the disadvantaged, the very same people they pretend to champion, do not have that luxury.

That is why it is particularly distressing to see that the liberal elite is